

THE
L I F E
O F
Mr. THOMAS FIRMIN,
Late Citizen of London.

Written by one of his most intimate Acquaintance.

WITH A
S E R M O N
On *Luke x. 36, 37.*

Preach'd on the occasion of his Death.

Together with an Account of his
RELIGION, and of the present
State of the *Unitarian Controversy.*

L O N D O N,
Printed, and sold by *A. Baldwin* in
Warwicklane. MDCXCVIII.

三
一
一
一

Mr. & Mrs. John W.

18. 10. 1908

THE
LIFE
OF
Mr. THOMAS FIRMIN.

TH E long Acquaintance, and intimate Friendship, I had with Mr. *Firmin*, are (I confess) warrantable Causes, that so many do expect from me, an account of his (memorable) Life. If some other man would answer the publick expectation, with more Address ; as to Expression, Method, number and value of Observations and Reflections ; in a word, more Ambitiously : yet I will not be wanting in Sincerity, or Truth.

Thomas Firmin, was born at *Ipswich* in *Suffolk*; in the month of *June*, *Anno 1632*. being the Son of *Henry Firmin*, and of

Prudence his Wife. *Henry* and *Prudence*, as they did not overflow with wealth of the World; so neither was their condition Low, or Strait. God gave them, the wish of *Solomon*, neither *Poverty* nor *Riches*; but that middle Estate and Rank, which containeth all that is valuable and desirable in Wealth, without the Gaudery, Vanity and Temptations, that (generally) adhere to Riches. But these two were very considerable in their degree, or place, both as to esteem, and plenty; by means of their Sobriety, Diligence, and good Conduct, the effects of their Piety. They were of the number of those, who were then called *Puritans*, by the looser sort of people: who were wont to impute *Precisianism*, or affected *Puritanism*, to such as were more Devout; and withal, more Conscientious, and Exemplary, than is ordinary; tho in the way of the *Church of England*.

When he was of capable years for it, they put their Son (*Thomas Firmin*) to an Apprentiship in *London*; under a Master who was (by Sect or Opinion) an *Arminian*, a Hearer of *Mr. John Goodwyn*. Our young man, accompanying his Master to the elegant and learned Sermons of *Mr. Goodwyn*, soon exchanged the (harsh)

(harsh) Opinions of *Calvin*, in which he had been educated ; for those (more honourable to God, and more accountable to the Human Reason) of *Arminius* and the Remonstrants. And now it was, that he learned, as was the commendable Custom of those times, to write Short-hand ; at which he was so dextrous, that he would take into a Book, any Sermon that he heard, word for word as it was spoke by the Preacher ; if the Sermon were not delivered, with too much precipitance. Of this he made a double use ; both then, and *in the very busiest part of his Life*. For, if the Sermon was considerable, for (judicious) Morality, or weighty Arguments ; he often read it, in his Short-hand Notes, for his own further Improvement : and then took the pains, to write it out (in words at length) for the benefit of his Acquaintance. He left behind him a great many little Books of that kind ; Sermons, copied fair from his Short-hand notes : which, not seldom, are *multum in parvo*.

As to his demeanor, in his Apprenticeship ; he was so nimble in his motions, in taking down, opening Goods to Chapman, &c. that some gave him, the name of Spirit. And in making his Bargain, his

Words and Address were so pleasing, and respectful; that after some time, the Customers rather chose to deal with *Thomas*, than with the Master of the Shop: or if a Bargain stuck between a Customer and his Master, he would decide the difference to the liking of both.

He met however with one rub, in the course of his Service; for the elder Apprentice interverted five pounds of his Masters money, and laid it to the charge of *Tom Firmin*. I know not whether the Imputation was believed, probably it was not; but it pleased God himself to judg in the case. For the elder Servant was, shortly after, taken with a mortal Sickness; and before he died made confession, that he took and spent his Masters mony, *Tho. Firmin* not being in the least privy to it. Thus he that made all things, the very least, does not disdain or neglect to judg all things, even little things, in the properest time. Many Crimes are suffered to rest, or are not presently called to judgment; because the delay of Justice ordinarily hurts no body: but when the Innocent and Virtuous lie under imputations, by occasion of the guilt of others; the detection of Offenders, and the execution of wrath is but seldom (if ever) respite.

So

So soon as he was made free, he began to trade for himself, tho his first Stock was but about 100*l.* By the opinion he had raised of himself among the Merchants and others, and the love he had gained among his Master's Customers, the Neighbourhood, and a great number of incidental Acquaintance, he overcame the difficulties of so weak and incompetent a beginning; so that in the year 1660 he married a Citizens Daughter with 500*l.* Portion.

From his first setting up (as they speak) for himself, he would be acquainted with all persons that seemed to be worthy, Foreigners as well as English, more especially Ministers: he seldom dined without some such at his Table; which, tho somewhat chargeable to his (then) slender abilities, was of great use to him afterwards, both in relation to the Poor, and the Publick. For out of his large Acquaintance and multitude of Friends, he engaged the (powerful) Interest of some, and the (weighty) Purses of others; in some of those great designs of Charity, or other Services to the Publick, for which I shall hereafter account.

Now also it was, that he hapned on Mr. Bidle, who much confirmed him in his

his *Arminian* Tenents, and carried him a great deal further. Mr. *Bidle* perswaded him, that the Unity of God is a Unity of Person as well as of Nature ; that the Holy Spirit is indeed a Person, but not God. He had a great and just esteem of Mr. *Bidle's* Piety, Exemplariness and Learning ; and is that Friend (mentioned in Mr. *Bidle's* Life) who gave Mr. *Bidle* his Bed and Board till he was sent Prisoner by Protector *Oliv. Cromwel* to the Isle of *Scilly* ; and when there, Mr. *Firmin* with another Friend, procured for him a yearly Pension of 100 Crowns from the Protector, besides what he obtained from other Friends, or gave himself.

Mr. *Firmin's* *Diversion*, in this part of his Life, was Gardening ; for which purpose he cultivated a piece of ground at *Hoxton*, not a mile from *London* ; where he raised Flowers, and (in time) attained no small skill in the art of Gardening, in the culture of Flowers, Herbs, Greens, and Fruit-trees of all sorts. I have often born him company to his Garden ; but either going or coming back he used often to visit the Poor and Sick : this was one of Mr. *Bidle's* Lessons, that 'tis a duty not only to relieve, but to visit the Sick and Poor ; because they are hereby en-

encouraged and comforted, and we come to know of what nature and degree their straits are ; and that some are more worthy of assistance than others : and their condition being known, sometimes we are able to assist them by our Counsel, or our Interest, much more effectually than by the Charity we *do* or *can* bestow upon them.

Before I pass to the next Scene of Mr. *Firmin*'s Life, I am obliged to take notice, that by his first Wife he had a Son and a Daughter ; the former lived to man's estate, but died (a Bachelor) about seven years before his Father. The Mother of these two Children died while Mr. *Firmin* was (occasionally) at *Cambridg*, managing there some affairs of his Trade : her death was accompanied with this remarkable Circumstance. Mr. *Firmin* dreamt at *Cambridg*, that he saw his Wife breathing her last : whereupon early in the morning he took Horse for *London* ; but on the way thither he met the Messenger who was sent to give him notice of her decease.

Another (necessary) Remark belonging to this part of his Life is, that tho hitherto his wealth was no more than a *competence*, considering his liberal humour, and

and the multitude of his Acquaintance ; yet he was even then a most kind Brother, Uncle and Kinsman : Of which the Reader may take account in this following Transcript, being the Copy of a Paper written by one of his nearest Relations, and who hath lived with him above thirty years, and was (a great part of that time) his Partner ; being a Person of great Sobriety, Diligence, Integrity and Prudence. " He had many Relations, of " several degrees, who stood in need of his " care and help ; to whom he was a very " kind Brother, Uncle and Kinsman : be- " sides the great pains he took to promote " them, as it lay in his way or power : " his loss by some of them, for whom he " advanced money, and his disbursements " for others of them, amounted to very " considerable sums ; a good part of which " was not long after his first beginning " in the World ; which was the greater " prejudice to him, because *then* his own " circumstances required mony to carry " on his Trade with ease and advantage. " Be sure he had then more occasion for his " mony, than when he was arrived to a " very considerable Estate, which he did " not till about seventeen years before his " death. His Estate at (about) seven- " teen

" teen years before his decease, was *three*
" *times greater than when he died*, tho then
" considerable. He might easily have in-
" creased it as much as he diminished it,
" had he set his heart on Riches; but
" those he never valued in comparison of
" doing good: and I have often heard
" him say, *he would not die worth more*
" *than Five Thousand Pound.*

Of his Liberalities to the Poor, and the Deserving, and the *motives* to them, I may say enough hereafter. But for his beneficence to his Kindred, it proceeded not *merely* from the benignity of his Nature, or natural Affection; which (however) to cherish and improve is a great virtue; but from his *reverence to the Christian Religion*. For as he would frequently say, that Passage of St. Paul to *Timothy* is to be read as it stands in the Margin of our Bibles, " He that provides " not for his own **K I N D R E D**, is worse " than an Infidel: so he was wont to give that Text as the reason of his Bounties to his Relations. So far was he from that *Deism*, of which some have been so over-forward to suspect him.

During the Imprisonment of Mr. *Bidle* at *Scilly*, Mr. *Firmin* was settled in *Lombardstreet*, where first Mr. *Jacomb*, then

Dr.

Dr. *Outram*, was Minister: With these two, being excellent Preachers, and learned men, he maintained a respectful and kind Friendship; which was answered as affectionately and cordially on their parts. Now also he grew into intimacy with Dr. *Whichcot*, Dr. *Worthington*, Dr. *Wilkins*, Mr. *Tillotson*: Dr. *Wilkins* was afterwards Bishop of *Chester*, Mr. *Tillotson* (for he was not yet made Doctor) Archbishop of *Canterbury*; but in their Dignity, and to the very last, Mr. *Firmin* had the same place and degree in their esteem and friendship, that at any time formerly he had. While Dr. *Tillotson* preached the *Tuesdays Lecture* at St. *Lawrence*, so much frequented by all the Divines of the Town, and by a great many Persons of Quality and Distinction: when the Doctor was obliged to be at *Canterbury*, where he was Dean, or was out of Town, either for diversion or health; he generally left it to Mr. *Firmin* to provide Preachers for his Lecture, and Mr. *Firmin* never failed to supply his place with some very eminent Preacher; so that there never was any complaint on the account of Dr. *Tillotson*'s absence. And this Mr. *Firmin* could easily do, for now there was hardly a Divine of Note, (whether in *London*, or in the

the Country that frequented *London*) but Mr. *Firmin* was come acquainted with him. Which thing helped him much to serve the Interests of many (hopeful) young Preachers and Scholars; Candidates for Lectures, Schools, Cures, or Rectories; for whom he would solicit with as much affection and diligence as other men do for their Sons, or near Relations.

See here a Trader, who knew no Latin or Greek, no Logick or Philosophy; compast about by an incredible number of learned Friends, who differed so widely in opinion from him, and were continually attacking him for his (supposed) Errors; yet could they never remove him from the belief of *the Unity of God*, nor did *their* Importunities, or his Resistance, break off (or so much as lessen) the friendship between 'em; certain arguments of the extraordinary wit and good address of our Friend.

Her late Majesty (*Queen Mary*) of most happy memory, having heard much of Mr. *Firmin*'s usefulness in all publick Designs, especially those of *Charity*; and that he was heterodox in the Articles of the *Trinity*, the *Divinity* of our *Saviour*, and the *Satisfaction*; She spoke to *Archbishop Tillotson*, and earnestly recommended it to

to him, to set Mr. *Firmin* right in those weighty and necessary points. The Archbishop answered, that he had often endeavour'd it ; but Mr. *Firmin* having so early and long imbibed the *Socinian* Doctrine, was not now capable of a contrary impression. However his *Grace* published his Sermons (formerly preached at St. *Lawrence's*) concerning those Questions, and sent Mr. *Firmin* one of the first Copies from the Press. Mr. *Firmin* not convinced by his *Grace's* Reasonings, or his Arguments from Holy Scripture, caused a respectful Answer (altho some have stretched one Expression too far) entituled, *Considerations on the Explications and Defences of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, to be drawn up and publisht, himself giving to his *Grace* a Copy of it. I must not omit to do the Archbishop right against those who pretend, that the Archbishop, notwithstanding those Sermons, was in his heart a *Unitarian*. For Mr. *Firmin* himself told me, shortly after the Archbishop had publisht those Sermons, that going to *Lambeth*, and the Archbishop hapning to dine in private, he sent for Mr. *Firmin* to him, and said to this effect, That the Calumnies of people had obliged him to publish his Sermons, some time since preached

preached at St. Laurence's against the Tenents of *Socinus*; that he had sincerely preached, as he then thought, and continued still to think of those Points; that however no bodies false imputations should provoke him to give ill Language to persons who dissented *conscientiously*, and for weighty reasons. That he knew well this was the case of the *Socinians*, for whose learning and dexterity he should always have a respect, as well as for their sincerity and exemplariness. Afterwards, when Mr. Firmin gave him a Copy of the *Considerations*; after he had read it; he only said, *My Lord of Sarum shall humble your Writers.* Nor did he afterwards at any time express the least coldness on the account of the Answer made to him, but used Mr. Firmin as formerly, enquiring as he was wonted, *How does my Son Giles?* so he called Mr. Firmins Son by his second Wife.

About the time the (Great and Good) Archbishop died, the Controversie concerning the Trinity and the depending Questions, received an unexpected Turn. The *Unitarians* took notice from *D. Petavius*, *Dr. R. Cudworth*, *S. Curtellius*; the *Oxford Heads*, *Dr. S—th* and others, that their Opposers agreed indeed in contending for a Trinity of Divine Persons,

but differed from one another, even as much as from the Unitarians, concerning what is to be meant by the term *Persons*. Some of 'em say, three Divine *Persons* are three (Eternal Infinite) *Minds*, *Spirits*, *Substances* and *Beings*; but others reject this as Heresie, Blasphemy, and Tritheism. These latter affirm, that GOD is one (Infinite, Eternal, All-perfect) *Mind* and *Spirit*; and the Trinity of *Persons* is the Godhead, Divine Essence, or Divine Substance, considered as *Unbegotten*, *Begotten*, and *Proceeding*: which *Modes* or *Properties* they (further) explain by *Original Wisdom*, *Unbegotten*, and therefore named the Father; the *reflex Wisdom*, *Logos*, or *W O R D*, which being generated or begotten, is called the Son; and the eternal Spiration of *Divine Love*, that has therefore the name of *Holy Spirit*. The *Unitarians* never intended to oppose any other Trinity, but a Trinity of (infinite) *Minds* or *Spirits*; grant to 'em, that GOD is one Infinite Spirit or Mind, not two or three, they demand no more. They applied themselves therefore to enquire, which of these Trinities, a Trinity of *Spirits* or of *Properties*, is the Doctrine of the Catholic Church: they could not miss of a ready satisfaction; all Systems,

Ca-

Catechisms, Books of Controversie, Councils, Writers that have been esteemed Catholic, more especially since the (General) *Lateran Council, Anno 1215.* and the Reformation, have defined G O D to be *one Infinite All-perfect Spirit*; and the Divine Persons to be nothing else but the Divine Essence or *Godhead*, with the three *relative Properties*, Unbegotten, and Begotten, and Proceeding. They saw therefore plainly, that the difference between the Church and the *Unitarians* had arose from a meer mistake of one anothers meaning: a mistake occasioned (chiefly) by the unscriptural terms *Trinity, Persons*, and such like. They resolved, that it became them, as good *Christians*, to seek the Peace of the Catholic Church, and not to litigate about *Terms*, (tho never so *unproper*, or implying only *Trifles*) when the *things* intended by those Terms, are not unsound or heterodox. These (Honest, Pacific) Inclinations of men, who drove no design in their dissent from the Church, gave birth to *the Agreement between the Unitarians and the Catholic Church*; a Book written at the instance (chiefly) of Mr. *Firmin*, in Answer to Mr. *Edwards*, the Bishops of *Worcester, Sarum and Chichester*, and Monsieur de

Luzanzy. I need not to say, what will be owned by every (Ingenuous) Learned Person, without hesitation, that *the Agreement* is as well the Doctrine of the Catholic Church, as of the *Unitarians*; and that in *all* the points, so long and fiercely debated and controverted by the Writers of this and of former Ages. It must be confess, the hands of a great many excellent Persons did concur to this Re-union of Parties that seemed so widely and unreconcilably divided, and did encourage the Author of *the Agreement* in his (disinterested laborious) searches into Antiquity, and other parts of Learning; and several learned men, some of them Authors in the *Socinian* (or *Unitarian*) way, examined the Work with the Candor and Ingenuity, that is as necessary in such cases, as Learning or Judgment are. Mr. *Firmin* publisht it when examined and corrected, with more satisfaction than he had before given forth so many Eristic Writings. I did not wonder however, that our Friend was so ready to embrace a reconciliation with the Church: for he was ever a lover of Peace, and always *conformed as far as he could*, according to that direction of the Apostle, *Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk*

walk by the same Rule. Which with the best Interpreters he understood thus, "Con-form to the Doctrines, Terms and Use- ges that are commonly received, as far as you can ; if in some things you dif- fer from the Church, yet agree with her, and walk by *her Rule* to the utmost that in Conscience you may ; or as the Apostle himself words it, *so far as (or whereunto) you have attained.* From this Principle it was, that our Friend ne- ver approved of those who separate from the communion of the Church on the ac- count of Ceremonies, Habits, form of Government, or other *mere Circumstanti- als* of Religion. He was wont to tell such, that *seeing 'twas* undeniable, they might communicate with the Church *without either sin or scandal*, and did com- municate on some occasions ; it is there- fore both scandal and sin to separate and divide. With this he silenced many, and reclaimed divers.

In the Year 1658. the *Unitarians* were banisht out of *Poland*, the occasion this; *Poland* had been long harass'd with most dangerous Civil, and Foreign Wars, insomuch that at one time there were in Arms in *Poland*, *Lithuania* and the *Ukrain*, One hundred and fourscore thousand *Poles*,

as many *Tartars*, and two hundred thousand *Cossacks*, besides powerful Bodies of *Austrians*, and *Transilvanians*, which attacked *Poland* on the *West* and *South*. The ravages and desolations committed, and caused so by many great Armies in a Country that has but few fortified Places, were unexpressible: *Poland* therefore was reduced to such a feeble and desperate condition, that their King himself withdrew; and the King of *Swedenes* took the advantage of their confusion and low estate, to invade them with Forty thousand men, regular Troops. He took the Cities of *Warsaw* and *Cracow*, and with them almost all *Poland*: he constrained the *Polanders* to take an Oath of Subjection and Allegiance to him; which Oath was first submitted unto, and taken by the Roman-Catholics, then by the Protestants, and not till last of all by the *Unitarians*. But the *Swedish* King engaging himself in other Wars, particularly with *Denmark*, and in *Germany*, *John Casimire*, King of *Poland*, appeared again; and the *Poles* generally joining their King, at length drove the *Swedenes* out of *Poland*: the *Swedish* King found himself obliged to condescend to a (reasonable) Peace with King *Casimire*. As the *Unitarians* were the last that submitted

mitted to the obedience of *Swedeland*, so being bound thereto by an Oath, they did not concur with the other *Polanders* in rebelling against him: they considered the *Swedish* King as a fair Conqueror, and a Protestant Prince, and themselves as tied to him by Oath; therefore they even opposed in some places, the revolt from him. This was interpreted a desertion of their natural Prince, and native Country; and (tho all the Part-takers with the *Swedish* King were included in the Peace made with him) was avenged in the very next Diet after the Peace, by a Decree and Edict, the sum of which was as follows. "The Toleration granted by the "Laws, and Coronation-Oaths of the "Kings to Dissenters from the Church, "does not legally extend to the *Unitarians*, (whom they called *Arians*, or "Anabaptists) this being a new Heresie, "since the granting that Indulgence or "Toleration; therefore all *Unitarians*, "who within such a limited time, will "not embrace the Roman-Catholic Religion, shall be banisht out of *Poland*, "allowing however two years (in effect "but one) to sell their Estates, whether "real or personal. Hereupon the *Unitarians* left *Poland*, and settled some in

Transilvania, where divers Provinces and Cities are *Unitarian*; some in *Ducal Prus-sia*, and *Brandenburg*, where they enjoy like Privileges with his Electoral High-nesses other Subjects; some (few) in *Holland*. These *Unitarians* were (in my opinion) unhappy, that they had not a man among them, who could discern it, and shew 'em, that neither in the Article of the Trinity, nor of the Divinity of our Saviour, they had any *real* difference with the Catholic Church: and that the Terms used by the Church, imply nothing that is contrary to the Unity of God, as 'tis held by the learned men. Their *Confession*, which they publisht upon their Banishment, ascribes as much to our Saviour, as is intended by the *Catholic-terms* Incarnation, God-man, God the Son, Hypostatical (or personal) Union, and the rest: therefore seeing the Church will not dismiss those (unscriptural) Terms, but (for certain reasons) contents her self to interpret them to a sound sense, it had been well if the *Polish Unitarians* had been so dextrous, as to distinguish between an unsound Sense, and improper Terms; disclaiming only the former, and submitting to the latter. The *Unitarian* Congregations in *Poland* had many poor persons,

there-

therefore the Nobility and Gentry prayed a Contribution for them, from all *Unitarian* Churches of foreign parts: and tho they knew there were but few *Unitarian* Families in *England*, they sent a Letter to us to entreat our help. Mr. *Firmin* procured for 'em some assistances from private persons: and tho without a Brief, some collections in Churches; both these in the Year 1662. But I mention this for the sake of what hapned *Anno* 1681. for then King *Charles* granted a Brief for another sort of *Polonian* Sufferers, Protestants also: these were they who had suffered the *Unitarians* to be banisht about twenty years before, when it was in their power to have prevented it, if so much as one of their Deputies had protested against it in the Diet. They willingly permitted, nay they promoted the Violation of the Liberty of Dissenters not twenty years before; and now weakned by the losf of the whole *Unitarian* Interest, it came to their own turns to be the Sufferers: they had never lost either Country, or Liberty, if they had not voted themselves out of both, by their (former) Votes against the *Unitarians*. A Toleration or Liberty of Religion, once tapped, will - X soon run all out; for break it but in one Instance,

stance, or Party, and you have disannulled the whole *Reason* of it, and all the *Pleas* for it. The malice of any whomsoever against the *English Unitarians*, comes now too late ; they less dissent from the Church (if they are at all Dissenters) than any other denomination of Dissenters: therefore let those Dissenters look to it, who have promoted a Bill, in name and pretext, against Immorality, and *Blasphemy*; in truth and real design against the *Unitarians*. I said King *Charles* granted a Brief for the *Polonian* Protestants, who had assisted in banishing the *Polonian Unitarians*; this Brief Mr. *Firmin* promoted as much as in him lay : I find he received of Nine Dissenting Congregations, 110*l.* 16*s.* 10*d.* And in another Book I find the sum of 568*l.* 16*s.* 0*3*₄*d.* collected on the same account.

We are now come to another part of Mr. *Firmin*'s Life, his second Marriage: in the Year 1664. he married to a Daughter of a Justice of Peace in the County of *Essex*, and had with her, besides all the qualifications of a good Wife, a considerable Portion. God was pleased to lend to 'em several Children; but one Son, *Giles Firmin*, lived to man's estate. He was like

like to be an eminent Merchant, his Father giving him the whole Portion he had received with his Mother: and the young Gentleman going into *Portugal*, to manage there his own business; he was called by the Heavenly Father to Eternal Mercies.

In the Year 1665. was a great Plague, of which there died in that one year, in *London* only, near One hundred thousand persons: most of the wealthier Citizens removed themselves and Children into the Country; so did Mr. *Firmin*, but left a Kinsman in his House, with order to relieve some Poor weekly, and to give out Stuff to employ them in making such Commodities as they were wont. He foresaw that he should be hard put to it, to dispose of such an abundance of Commodities as these poor people would work off, in so long time, for him only: but when he returned to *London*, a wealthy Chapman (who was greatly pleased with his adventurous Charity) bought an extraordinary quantity of those Goods; so that he incurred no loss, at that time, by employing the Poor.

The year after the Sickness came the Fire, by which the City of *London* sustained the damage of Ten millions of Pounds
ster-

sterling. Mr. *Firmin*, with his Neighbours, suffered the loss of his House in *Lombard-street*, and took (thereupon) a House and Warehouse in *Leaden-hall-street*. But now his fine Spirit, and generous way of Trading were so well known, that in a few years he so improved his Stock, that he rebuilt his House, and built also the whole Court (excepting two or three Houses) in which he lived. And having now provided sufficiently for himself and Family, he began to consider the Poor.

His first service to them, or rather to God in their persons, was the building a Warehouse by the Water-side, for the laying up Corn and Coals, to be sold to the Poor in scarce and dear times at moderate and reasonable rates, at the rates they had been purchased, allowing only for loss (if any should happen) by damage of the Goods while kept.

He went on with his Trade in *Lombard-street* till the Year 1676. at which time I estimate he was worth about Nine thousand Pounds. If we consider, that this Estate was raised from a beginning of about One hundred Pounds, in an ordinary way of Trade, and in about twenty years time ; to what a mighty wealth would it have

have grown, in the hands of such a Manager, in his remaining twenty or one and twenty years? Had not his ingenit Liberality, great Mind and Zeal of serving the Divine Majesty, turned his endeavours a contrary way ; to support, and to raise others, while he lessened and impaired himself. For this year he erected his Warehouse in *Little Britain* for the imployment of the Poor in the Linen Manufacture. Let us hear what *Archbishop Tillotson* (then but *Dean Tillotson*) says of this Design of *Mr. Firmin*, in his Funeral Sermon on *Mr. Gouge*, *Anno 1681*.

“ He (*Mr. Gouge*) set the Poor of *St. Sepulchres* Parish (where he was Minister) to work, at his own charge. “ He bought Flax and Hemp for them to spin ; when spun, he paid them for their Work, and caused it to be wrought into Cloth, which he sold as he could, himself bearing the whole loss. This was a very wise and well-chosen way of *Charity* ; and in the good effect of it a much greater *Charity*, than if he had given to those very persons (freely and for nothing) so much as he made them to earn by their work : because by this means he rescued 'em from two most dangerous Temptations,

“ ons, Idleness and Poverty. This course
“ so happily devised, and begun by Mr.
“ *Gouge*, gave, it may be, the first hint
“ to that useful and worthy Citizen, Mr.
“ *Tbo. Firmin*, of a much larger Design ;
“ which has been managed by him, some
“ years in this City, with that vigour
“ and good success, that *many hundreds of*
“ *poor Children*, and others who lived
“ idle before, unprofitable both to them-
“ selves and the Public, now maintain
“ themselves, and are also some advan-
“ tage to the Community. *By the As-*
“ *sistance and Charity of many* excellent and
“ well-disposed persons, Mr. *Firmin* is en-
“ abled to bear the unavoidable loss and
“ charge of so vast an Undertaking ; and
“ by his own forward inclination to Cha-
“ rity, and unwearied diligence and acti-
“ vity, is fitted to sustain, and go through
“ the incredible pains of it. *Serm. on Mr.*
“ *Gouge*, p. 62, 63, 64.

“ Tis of this Project and Warehouse, that
Mr. *Firmin* himself speaks in a Book of
his, entitled, *Proposals for the employment*
of the Poor, in these words : “ ‘Tis now
“ above four years since I set up my
“ Workhouse in *Little Britain*, for the
“ imployment of the Poor, in the Linen
“ Manufacture ; which hath afforded so
“ great

“ great help and Relief to *many hundreds*
“ of poor Families ; that I never did, and
“ I fear never shall do an Action more to
“ my own satisfaction, or to the good
“ and benefit of the Poor. He employed
in this Manufacture, some times 1600,
some times 1700 Spinners, besides Dressers
of Flax, Weavers and others.

Because he found that his Poor must work sixteen hours in the day to earn six-pence, and thought that their necessities and labour were not sufficiently supplied or recompensed by those earnings ; therefore he was wont to distribute **Charity** among them, as he saw their need, especially at *Christmas*, and in hard weather. Without which **Charity**, some of them had perished for want, when either they or their **Children** fell ill. He used also to lay in vast quantities of **Coals**, which he gave out by a Peck at a time : whoever of the Spinners brought in two pound of **Yarn**, might take away with 'em a Peck of **Coals**, besides what **Coals** were given to such as were antient, had many **Children**, or any sick in their Family. But because they foiled themselves by carrying away **Coals** in their Aprons or Skirts ; to obviate that inconvenience, and damage to 'em, he gave 'em **Canvas** Bags.

Bags. Cleanliness contributing much to health, he distributed among 'em Shifting made of the coarser and stronger sort of Cloth, that had been spun by themselves, and of the same among their Children. Much of this Shifting he begged for them; for he found amoag his Acquaintance and Friends, divers charitable persons, who would rather buy the Cloth that had been wrought by our Home-Poor, than purchase it, tho at somewhat cheaper rates, from Merchants or Shops, that sell scarce any but foreign Cloth. By the assistance and order of his Friends, he gave to Men, Women and Children, sometime 3000 Shirts and Shifts in two years. But still further to encourage and help his Poor, he would invite persons of Ability to come to his Workhouse, on days the Spinners brought their Yarn; that seeing their Poverty and Diligence, he might the more easily persuade 'em to give, or subscribe something for their relief. Some would work, but knew not the art of Spinning, or were not able to purchase Wheels and Reels; for these he hired Teachers, and freely gave 'em their Reels and Wheels: He often took up poor Children as they were begging in the Streets, whom he caused to be taught at his own charge, and

and provided for 'em their Reels and Wheels, which were never deducted out of their Work.

In his Book of *Proposals* he takes notice, that " In above 4000 *l.* laid out " the last Year, reckning House-rent, " Servants wages, Loss by Learners, with " the Interest of the Money, there was " not above 200 *l.* lost. One chief reason " of which, was the Kindness of several " Persons; who took off good Quantities of " Commodities, at the Price they cost me " to spin and weave: And in particular, " the *East-India* and *Guinea* Companies " gave me Encouragement, to make their " *Allabas* Cloths, and coarse Canvas for " Pepper Bags; which before they bought " from foreign Countries.

He published that Book of *Proposals*, to engage others, to set the Poor on work, at a Publick Charge; or at least to assist him, and two or three Friends, in what he had now carried on, for above Five Years, at the loss of above *One Thousand Pounds*. But finding that my Lord Mayor, and the Aldermen, were not persuaded by what he had offered in his Book, and by Discourse with them, and other Wealthy Citizens; he began to lessen the Spinning Trade: For I find that in the Year

1682, the whole Disbursement was only 2337*l.* 3*s.* and yet the Loss thereby that Year, was 214*l.*

It should seem he met not so many Charitable Persons, who would buy his Manufacture at the Price it cost him, as in some former Years: Nay from this time, the Loss increased yearly upon him: For seven or eight Years together he lost two Pence in the Shilling, by all the Work of his Poor; but he was content, for he would say, *Two Pence given them by Loss in their Work, was twice so much saved to the Publick, in that it took them off from Beggary, or Theft.* But his Loss some Years was extraordinary. In the Year 83. the Trade encreasing again, his own Disbursements, beside his Friends, were not less than 2000*l.* the Loss for that Year was 400*l.* Continuing thus, in the Year 84. the Balance of Loss not then received, amounted to 763*l.* And in the Year 85. it increased to 900: 11: 3. toward which Loss, an eminent Citizen, who had 500*l.* in that Stock, quitted the whole Principal, and required no Interest. In the Years 86, 87, 88, and 89, the Trade declined for want of more such Benefactors. The Loss now remaining being 413: 11: 3. the value of the Goods then in hand, and Debts

Debts standing out, computed at 372*l.* 3*s.* 1*d.* I find of the whole no more receiv'd than 279:0:1. which falling short 93:3:0. added to the former Loss of 413:11:3. makes 506:14:3. This whole Sum I find not any way made good, but stands still as due to Mr. *Firmin*, tho' never reckon'd by him as any part of his Estate.

Anno 1690. The Design was taken up by the *Patentees of the Linen Manufacture*; who made the Poor and others, whom they employed, to work cheaper; yet, that was not sufficient, to encourage them to continue the Manufacture. The *Patentees* agreed with Mr. *Firmin*, to give him 100*l.* a Year, to Oversee and Govern their Manufacture: But seeing their Undertaking had not answer'd their, or his Expectations, he never received the promised Salary, nor discounted it to 'em; and if he had, he would certainly have given it (in Money, Linen, and Coals) among the Spinners. Which I the rather adventure to say, because when he drew some Prizes in one of Mr. *Neal's* Lotteries, to the Value of 180*l.* he reserved to himself, only the Money he had adventured: The Money gained he gave, partly to some Relations, and partly to the Poor.

But the poor Spinners, being thus deserted, Mr. *Firmin* returned to 'em again ; and managed that Trade as he was wont : But so, that he made it bear almost its own Charges. But that their smaller Wages might be comfortable to them, he was more Charitable to 'em in his distributions, than in any former Years ; and begged for 'em, of almost all Persons of Rank, with whom he had intimacy, or so much as Friendship. He would also carry his Cloth to divers, with whom he scarce had any Acquaintance ; telling 'em, *it was the Poor's Cloth, which in conscience they ought to buy at the Price it could be afforded* : If the Buyers were very Wealthy, they must also give some of the Cloth they had bought, in Shirting ; and he would quickly send for the Mony, that was due for the Cloth. But without these Ways, it had been impossible for him, to employ such a multitude of People ; who could not stay a minute for their Mony. This continued to be his chief business, and care, to the day of his Death : Saving that about Two Years since, when the calling in the Clipped Mony, occasioned such a Scarcity of Current Coin, that it was hard with many Rich to get Mony enough to go to Market ;

ket ; he was forced to dismiss some of his Spinners, for mere want of Mony to pay 'em. I heard his Partner and Kinsman Mr. *James*, tell him ; He had taken about 700*l.* out of their Cash already, for the Spinners : And that he should take out no more, as yet. Not that Mr. *James* was not always an Encourager and Promoter of the Work-House Charity ; for he never took any Interest-mony, for his Share in that Stock : but their whole common Trade going thro' the hands of Mr. *James*, and being managed by him ; he was more sensible than Mr. *Firmin*, that more ready Mony could not be spared to that use, without great Disadvantage to their Trade.

Flax and Tow being Goods very combustible, Mr. *Firmin* was always a little uneasy , lest by some Accident the Work-house, being in the keeping only of Servants, should take fire : And I remember, the Boys in one of their licentious times of throwing Squibs, flung one into the Work-house Cellar, where the Tow and Flax was stowed ; but Providence did not permit, it should do any hurt.

Before I dismiss this Work-house, I must take notice, that at his death our Friend told Dr. *L.* that he did not regret his Dy-

ing, only he could have been willing (had God so pleased) to have continued two Months longer, to put his Work-house and Spinners into another Method. That Method is now settled, by Mr. James; and the poor Spinners employ'd as formerly.

Concerning this Work-house, and the Spinners, Mr. Firmin would often say, that, *To pay the Spinners, to relieve 'em with Money begged for 'em, with Coals, and Shirting, was to him such a Pleasure; as magnificent Buildings, pleasant Walks, well cultivated Orchards and Gardens, the Jollity of Musick and Wine, or the Charms of Love or Study, are to others.* I am persua-ded, he said no more than the Truth; for Mr. James, who was his Apprentice, Journey-man and Partner upwards of thirty Years, gives this Account of his Uncle's Expence on this, and other Charities; [Comparing and balancing his Ex-pences and Losses with his Gains, he might have left an Estate behind him of at least 20000 *l.* if he had not given and spent it in publick and private Charities, Buildings, and other good Works; whereas now his Estate amounts to no more than a sixth part of that Sum.] But it was his Settled Resolution not to be Richer: He told

told me, but little before he died, that were he now worth Forty Thousand Pounds, he would die but very little richer, than he then was. I incline to think, he would have died much Poorer: For such a Sum would have engaged him in such vast Designs for his Province, the Poor; that (probably) he would have gone beyond the Expence he intended at first for them. I have heard his Physician blame him sometimes, that he did not allow himself competent time for his Dinner; but hasten'd to *Garraway's Coffee-House*, about his Affairs. But those Affairs were seldom, if ever, his own; he was to sollicit for the Poor, or in the business of some Friend who wanted Mr. *Firmin's* Interest: Or he was to meet on some design relating to the Publick Good. In these matters his Friends, that were not quick in their Dispatches, had reason oftentimes to complain of him, as not giving them sufficient time, to dispatch Businels with him: For he was nimble above most Men, in Apprehension, in Speech, Judgment, Resolution, and Action.

He was persuaded by some, to make trial of the *Woolen Manufacture*; because at this, the Poor might make better Wages, than at Linen-Work. For this, he

took a House in *Artillery-Lane* : But the Price of Wool advancing very much, and the *London-Spinsters* being almost wholly unskilful at Drawing a Woolen-Thread, after a considerable Loss by 'em, and 29 Months trial, he gave off the Project.

He labour'd with a particular Zeal and Activity, in redeeming poor Debtors out of Prison ; not only as it was Charity to the Persons, but out of regard to their (in the mean time) distressed and starved Families : He would say, The Release of one Man out of Prison, is a Relief bestowed on his whole Family. I have sure grounds to believe, that it was himself of whom he spake, in his *Book of Proposals*, p. 83. *I know one Man, who, in a few Tears last past, with the Charity of some Worthy Persons, has delivered some Hundreds of poor People out of Prison; who lay there, either only for Jailors Fees, or for very small Debts: I have reason to believe that, many more have been delivered by others; and yet one shall find the Prisons very full of Prisoners at this time.*

As he discharged great Numbers of *Prisoners*, he took care for the better and easier Subsistence of others, while in Prison : For he would examine the *Prisoners*, concerning their Usage by their *Keepers* ;

Keepers ; and sometimes prosecuted Jailors, before the Judges, for extorting unlawful Fees, and other exorbitant Practices. I remember, one of the Jailors prosecuted by Mr. *Firmin*, made a Rope, and hanged himself before the matter was determined : A strong Presumption, that he was conscious to himself, of great Faultiness ; and a demonstrative Proof, of the great need of such Prosecutions, and of the Virtue of him that undertook 'em.

He continued these Endeavours for poor Debtors, from before the Year 1681. to his last Breath : but being grieved, that he could do nothing for Debtors, laid up for great Sums ; therefore, on behalf of such he always vigorously promoted *Acts of Grace* by Parliament, whereby Insolvent Debtors were discharged. Tho' he never was a Parliament man, he had a mighty Interest in both Houses ; and *was the Cause* that many Bills were quashed, and others passed : insomuch that once, when an *Act of Grace* for poor Prisoners, that was liable to have, and had an ill use made of it by unconscionable or knavish People, passed the Houses and Royal Assent ; he was upbraided with it by some of the Creditors, and told, *that it was his Act.*

Mr. *Firmin* was not insensible, that sometimes people come into Prisons, or otherwise become poor, more by their own Negligence, Idleness, Riot, and Pride, than by Mishap and Misadventure; yet he could not join with those, who say hereupon, *they hate the Poor*; and that such well deserve the Straits, and Miseries, that they bring on themselves. He was wont to answer, to such Reasonings, that; *It would be a miserable World indeed, if the Divine Providence should act by that Rule: if God should show no Favour, grant no Help, or Deliverance, to us, in those Straits or Calamities, that are the effects of our Sins. If the universal Lord seeks to reclame, and to better us, by Favours, and Graces; do we dare to argue against the Example set by Him; and against a Method, without which, no Man living may ask any thing of God?*

There is no place whatsoever, but of necessity it must have divers Poor, more especially *London*: where every House having one or more Servants, who are obliged to spend their whole Wages in Clothes; when these Servants marry, every little Mishap in the World reduces 'em to Beggary; their small, or rather no Beginnings are crushed, by every Accident. Mr. *Firmin* had so full a Sense of this,

this, that (in some Years of his Life) he begged about 500 *l.* a Year; which he distributed to the Poor, at their Houses, or at his own, by the Sums of 2*s.* 6*d.* or 5*s.* or 10*s.* or 15*s.* as he saw (or was well inform'd of) the Necessities of the Persons. The way he took, for the better effecting this Charitable Distribution, was; he would enquire of the most noted Persons for Honesty and Charity, in the several Parishes, who were the most Necessitous and best Deserving Poor in that Neighbourhood: He went then to their Houses, that he might judg farther by their meagre Looks, number of Children, sorry Furniture, and other Circumstances, in what proportion it might be fit to assist 'em. He always took their Names and Numbers into a Book; and sent a Copy of so much of his Book, to the Persons who had intrusted him with Charity, as answered to the Mony trusted to him by every such Person: That if he so minded, he might make enquiry, by himself, or any other, concerning the Truth of the Account given in. But Mr. *Firmin*'s Fidelity grew to be so well known, that after a few years, divers of his Contributors would not receive his Accounts. I know a certain Person, whose hand was with

Mr.

Mr. *Firmin* in all his Charities ; I should not exceed (I believe) if I said, that in *Twenty One Years* time he hath given by Mr. *Firmin*'s hand, or at his Recommendation, *Five or Six Thousand Pounds* : this Person hath himself told me, that Mr. *Firmin* was wont to bring him the Accounts of his Disbursements, till he was even weary of 'em, and (because he was so well assured of him) he desired him, not to bring him any more. Sometimes the Sums brought, or sent in, to Mr. *Firmin*, for the Poor, were such, as did enable him to spare some part to some whom he knew to be charitably dispos'd like himself: In that case, he would send small Sums, such as 40 s. or 3 l. sometimes more, to those his Acquaintance, which Sums they were to divide, among the Poor of their Vicinage ; whose Names and Case those Friends were to return to him. He hath sent to me, and divers others that I know of, many such Sums ; in *Christmas* Time, in Hard Weather, and Times of Scarcity.

In these Distributions, Mr. *Firmin* sometime considered others, besides the mere Poor ; particularly the poorer sort of Ministers : I doubt not he hath made use of many hands besides mine ; but by me he hath

hath sent (of his own proper motion) divers times the Sum of 40 s. sometimes two Guineas, to Ministers that were good Preachers, and Exemplary, but their Vicarage, Curacy, or Lecture small. I have known that he has sent no less than 10 l. to a Clergyman in Debt, or opprest with many Children ; when he hath been well assured, that the Person was a Man of Probity and Merit. He asked me once, concerning Mr. P. of Gr. Ch. what sort of Man he was ? I answer'd ; his Mind was much above his Purse ; He was Charitable, Curious, Learned ; a Father among young Scholars, who were promising Men ; but his Living not above 80 l. or 90 l. a Year. Mr. Firmin said ; *I have done considerable for that man* : I answer'd, as I thought my self obliged ; You may take it on my Word, that your Liberality was never better placed. Afterwards I met the Widow of Mr. P. in London ; I desired her to accept half a Pint of Wine, at the next Tavern : While we were together, I asked her, Whether there had not been some Acquaintance between her Husband and Mr. Firmin. She said, The Acquaintance was not much ; but the Friendship great. She said, Her Husband was acquainted with many Persons of Quality, that

that he had experienced their Liberality thro' the whole course of his Life: because his Address, as well as his Merit, was so remarkable. She said; that of so many Benefactors to Mr. P. Mr. *Firmin* had done most for him, both in Life and Death. When her Husband died, his Estate would not pay his Debts; she was advised here-upon, by a Clergyman, to propose a Composition with the Creditors: that seeing every one could not be fully pay'd, yet all of 'em might receive part of their Debt. She consulted Mr. *Firmin*, by Letter, about this; he approved the Advice, and was one of the first that subscribed the Composition: but withal, sent her a Letter, wherein he remitted his whole Debt; and desired to see her, when her Affair was cleared, and she at quiet. When she came to him, he said, *He had miss'd in his aim, in what he design'd to procure for her, but he would do something himself*: Shortly after, he sent her a good *Norwich Stuff*, that very well clothed her, and her Four Children. She told me this, with many Tears; to which I had the more regard, because I had long known her to be a Virtuous, and very Prudent Woman.

As

As Mr. *Firmin's* Pains, and Care in giving forth these Charities, were not small; so neither were they little, in procuring them: Not only because many Persons are hardly perswaded, to give the Bread of themselves and Families to others; but because 'tis much more difficult to beg for others, than to give ones self. He that begs for others, must be Master of a great deal of Prudence, as well as Wit, and Address: He must know, how to choose the *Mollia tempora fandi*, the fittest opportunity of speaking; and when he speaks, he must apply himself to those passions of the Person, by which only he can be wrought on. I remember Mr. *Firmin* told me, of his applying to a Citizen of the highest rank, for his Charity in rebuilding *St. Thomas's* Hospital: Of whom he demanded no less than 100*l.* The Person had been some way disengaged by the Governours of that Hospital; so he refused to subscribe any thing: But our Friend seeing him one day among some Friends whom he respected, and by whom he was willing to be respected; and that also he was in a very good Humour; he push'd on his Request for the Hospital, and prevailed with him so far, as to subscribe the whole 100*l.* But to his

his personal Solicitations, he was forced sometimes to add Letters; and sometimes succeeded by the Arguments in his Letters, better than by the Authority of his personal Mediation. I find in one of his Books, in the Year 1679. the Sum of 520*l.* 6*s.* received of seventy two Persons; in a Book of the Year 1681. the Sum of 531*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* received of forty three Persons. All these were to be treated with, privately, and opportunely; which required much Time, Caution, Industry, and Discretion: which laid out on his own Business, what great Effects would it have produced? Mr. *Firmin* might, much more easily, have been one of the great Men of the World, than Almoner General for the Poor, and the Hospitals. I observe in the same Book of 1681. that the Disbursements against the Sum 531*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* do amount to 594:15:11. the Balance over paid is 62:15:5. which over-paid Balance is to be found in many of his Accounts, and I believe it came out of his own Purse. I must note also, that the Sums were not given for the Poor alone, or for the Spinners alone; but of 50*l.* given, 30 of it is for the Spinners, and 20 for the Poor, sometimes 20 for the Spinners and 30 for the Poor: Elsewhere 100*l.* is given, 50 for

50 for the Poor, and 50 for Spinners; Another gives 50*l.* for Cloth, to be divided to the Poor; Another 100*l.* for the same use.

Mr. *Firmin* having set his heart so much on Charity, could not but esteem and love Mr. *Gouge*; a Man of the same Spirit: whom, while he was in *London*, he got to table with him. 'Tis not to be doubted, that 'twas the intimate Friendship of these two Persons, that gave occasion to that (remarkable) passage, in Dr. *Tillotson*'s Funeral Sermon on Mr. *Gouge*, p. 82. "Mr. *Gouge* was of a disposition, "ready to imbrace and oblige all Men; "allowing others to differ from him, even "in Opinions that were very Dear to "him. Provided, Men did but *fear God*, "and work *Righteousness*; he loved them "heartily, how distant soever from him "in Judgment about less Necessary "things: in which he is worthy to be "propounded as an Example, to Men of "all Persuasions. And till the Example is followed, the World will never have Peace.

That great Preacher has given us an account, of Mr. *Gouge's* Religious Charity in printing divers good Books, in the *Welch* and *English* Tongues; to be given

to those that were Poor, and sold to such as could buy them: the Chief of those Prints, and the most Expensive, was an Edition of the *Bible* and *Liturgie* in the *Welch Tongue*; no fewer than Eight Thousand Copies, of this Work, were printed together. One cannot question, that Mr. *Firmin* contributed to, and procured divers Sums for this excellent Undertaking of his Friend; tho' all is attributed to Mr. *Gouge*, who was Chief in that great and good Work. After Mr. *Gouge*'s Death, I find the Sum of 419*l.* 9*s.* given to buy a Number of those *Bibles*; whereof Dr. *Tillotson* (then Dean of St. *Paul's*) gave 50*l.* Mr. *Morrice* 67*l.* other Persons the rest: but there wants in the Receipts 26*l.* 13*s.* to balance the Disbursement; and that, I judg, was Mr. *Firmin*'s mony.

Now that we are speaking of *Books*, I ought not to forget, that Mr. *Firmin* often printed Ten thousand Copies of the *Scripture-Catechism*; which some think was written by Dr. *Worthington*: But I have cause to believe, that the Author was Dr. *Fowler*, now Bishop of *Glocester*; who in compiling it, followed the Method of Dr. *Worthington*. These Mr. *Firmin* gave to his Spinners, and their Children;

dren; and to the Children of the Hospital: engaging them to get it by heart; and giving something to those that did. He lodged also great Numbers of them with Booksellers, at cheaper rates than they were printed, that they might be sold also cheaper; and thereby, be dispersed all over *England*. His Acquaintance might, at all times, have of them what Numbers they would, *gratis*. He valued this Catechism, because 'tis wholly in the Words of Scripture; favours no particular Party or Persuasion, and therefore is of general Use: the Aim of the Judicious Author being to instruct the Youth, and the Ignorant, in what *all Parties agree* is necessary to be believ'd, and done; leaving it to others, to engage 'em in Controversies and Debates.

In the Year 1680. and 1681. came over the *French* Protestants; new work for Mr. *Firmin's* Charity and Zeal: for of all the Objects of Charity, he thought those the most Deserving, who were undone for Conscience toward God; whether such Conscience be a well-inform'd Conscience, or an erroneous and mistaken: 'Tis not the truth or falsehood of the Opinion; but the Zeal for God, and the sincerity to the dictates of Conscience, that makes the

Martyr. Therefore now our Elemosinary General had to beg, not only for the Spinners, the Poor of the out-Parishes of *London*, the Redemption of Debtors from Prison, for Coals, and Shirtng ; but for a vast number of Religious Refugees , whose Wants required not only a great, but an immediate Succour. The first, and one of the most difficult Cares for them, was, how to provide Lodgings for such multitudes, in a City where Lodgings are as costly as Diet? But Mr. *Firmin* bethought him of the *Pest-House*, then empty of Patients : the Motion was approv'd by the *Lord Mayor* and *Court of Aldermen* ; and some Hundreds of these Strangers were accommodated in that spacious and convenient Place. As for Relief in Mony, they made their first application to the *French Church* : therefore I find in Mr. *Firmin*'s Books, *Delivered to the Deacons of the French Church* 50 l. to J. S. 10 l. to an old Man at Ipswich 20 l. This was immediately upon their coming over. In 1681 and 1682, I find the Sum of 2363 l. 10 s. 1 d. issued forth for the use of the *French* thro' his hands ; and in 1683, for the *French* Children at *Ware* 443 l. 18 s. 9 d. For their Meeting-House at *Rye* 20 l. I find upon his Books these following Sums , before a

Brief

Brief was granted to them, 100 l. then 155 l. in the next page 70 l. 15 s. To answer these Receipts, the Books say, Sept. 15. *Delivered to Mr. Carbonel, &c.* in 16 pieces of Cloth, 50 l. Sept. 24. To the Deacons at the Savoy, in Cloth, 20 l. Oct. 7. To Carbon, &c. in 32 pieces of Cloth, 100 l. 14 s. The balance is 27 l. 8 s. which (tis likely) was his own money.

In the Year 1682. he set up a Linen Manufacture for the French at *Ipswich*, to which himself gave 100 l. which was all sunk in their Service, saving that at last he received 8 l. 2 s. 6 d. He paid also for their Meeting-House at *Ipswich* 13 l. In the same Year also he disbursed for them for Coals 60 l. 10 s. whereof he received only 20 l. 10 s. There have been Four Briefs granted to the French, one by K. *Charles* in 1681. a second by K. *James* in 1686. another by K. *James* in 1687. the fourth by K. *William* in 1693. Besides which, K. *William* gave to 'em 1000 l. per Month for 39 Months. It was Mr. *Firmin* that was chiefly concerned in the distribution of all this Mony; especially of the Thirty Nine Thousand Pounds, which was committed to two Bishops, two Knights, and a Gentleman; but al-

most the whole Distribution was left to Mr. *Firmin*, sometimes with, but more commonly *without* their Inspection. I see I have omitted, before I was aware, the following Sums, paid to the French Protestants at *Ipswich*, before their Brief was collected; 45*l.* 10*s.* and 42*l.* and 45*l.* 9*s.* another 42*l.* to 21 Families at *Ipswich*.

He had a principal hand in the special Collections, that are now made every Winter, about *Christmas* time, in Churches, for the Poor in and about *London*. He was the man that solicited the King's Letter for making those Collections; he took care of printing and distributing the King's and Bishop of *London*'s Letters to the several Rectors, and other Ministers, of Churches in *London*, to be by them read in their respective Churches. He waited on the Lords of the Treasury for the King's part of that Charity: And when the Money, as well of the King as the Parishes, was collected, and paid into the Chamber of *London*, and was then to be divided, among the Poor of the several Parishes, by my Lords the Bishop and Mayor of *London*; no man could so well proportion their Dividends as Mr. *Firmin*: This was well known to their Lordships, who,

who, therefore, seldom made any alteration in his Distributions. In these matters, all the Church-Wardens made their applications to Mr. *Firmin*; and when the Dividend was settled, received their Warrants from him: For which purpose, the Bishop of *London* would many times entrust him with Blanks, and my Lord Mayor was always ready to give his Hand. The whole of this Charity was so constantly, and so many years, managed by Mr. *Firmin*, that, he dying some days before *Christmas* last, the King's Letter, for the Collection, was not given till the 12th of *January*: And when the Collection was brought in from the several Parishes, they were at a loss for the Distribution, and were glad to take direction from Mr. *Firmin*'s Pattern.

There hath been occasion in my last Section, to mention the Bishop of *London*, (Dr. *Henry Compton*) I ought not to omit, that Mr. *Firmin* could never speak of this Bishop, without a particular respect and deference: He admired the Candor, Moderation, Wisdom, and Dexterity, accompanied and tempered by Caution and Vigor; which (said he often) are so eminent in his Lordship, and so constantly appear upon all occasions, proper to any

of those Virtues, that I wish it were as easy to be like, as 'tis impossible not to esteem him. I return to Mr. *Firmin*.

During the last 23 or 24 years of his Life, he was one of the Governours of *Christ-Church Hospital* in *London*. 'Tis known to every body almost in *London*, that Mr. *Firmin* procured a great number, and very considerable Donations to this Hospital; but I cannot specific many particulars, because he kept not exact accounts of 'em; but those that have come to my knowledg, are remarkable; of one of which give me leave to give the Reader this account. The Honourable Sir *Robert Clayton*, having had it in his thoughts to make a provision for a Mathematical Master in that Hospital, became the hapy Proposer, and (by his interest in the then Lord Treasurer *Clifford*, and Sir *Robert Howard*) the successful Procurer of the establishment of a Mathematical School in that Hospital, for the constant breeding of the number of 40 Boys, skill'd in the *Latin Tongue*, to a perfect knowledg in the Art of Navigation. The occasion thus. There was 7000 *L* given to this Hospital, by a Citizen, (payable out of *Weavers-Hall*) for the maintenance of 40 Boys: Upon the Restoration, the Fund,
out

out of which this issued, reverting to the Crown, King *Charles* the 2d. upon the said Proposal and Petition to that purpose, was graciously pleased to grant to the Hospital the said 7000*l.* to be paid them by 1000*l.* per *Annum* for 7 years ; upon which the Hospital was obliged to maintain the said 40 Boys, successively to be so educated for ever. Sir *Robert Clayton* being greatly pleas'd that he had been an Instrument in so charitable and beneficial a Constitution, did afterwards meditate a Donation from himself to this Hospital, and so to take it into his special Care and Beneficence. And that which instigated him to these thoughts, was, he had laboured under a very grievous sickness, even to despair of recovery ; but it pleased the Almighty Governour that he did recover, and Mr. *Firmin* was very instrumental in it, both by his personal ministry, and giving quick notices to Physicians of several symptoms. Hereupon, Sir *Robert* adviseth with Mr. *Firmin* about the building and adding a Ward for Girls to this Hospital, as a testimony of his gratitude to God ; and determined that Mr. *Firmin* should have the management of that Affair. Accordingly he went about it, you may be sure with great Alacrity and Diligence ;

gence; but at whose charge he erected this large Building was a secret, not known to any of the Family but *John Morris* Esq; Sir *Robert*'s Partner in this Work also; and perhaps to my Lady: In this was laid out near 4000 *l.* but it was not yet finisht, when upon occasion of the unhappy Difference between the Passive-Obedience Men and the Law-Obedience Men, the former having the power on their side, turn'd out the latter both out of the Government of the City and of that Hospital, among whom Sir *Robert* (tho' eminent) was ejected, together with his faithful Agent and Friend Mr. *Firmin*, another Governour as I have said. Then it was that Mr. *Firmin* broke silence, and upbraided those excluding Governours with depriving the Hospital of such a Benefactor as the Builder of that Ward. For Sir *Robert* was now alone, Mr. *Morris* being deceased, and having left him the residue of his Estate. Mr. *Firmin* also built a Ward for the Sick, to prevent infecting the Healthy and Sound; if the small Pox, or other contagious distemper, should happen among the Children, as it often doth. This Ward cost 426 *l.* 4*s.* besides 6*l.* 5*s.* for a Press; but the Gentleman that gave the mony for both, would not then be known;

known ; and continues still of the same mind. I find, however, an account in Mr. *Firmin's* Books of 1537*l.* (the Sick Ward included) received, and laid out by Mr. *Firmin* : And another account of 794*l.* 10*d.* received, with the names of the Persons who gave it, and the uses for which it was given. In the Year of our Lord 1675, our Friend built two Houses for the two Beadles, or other Officers of the Hospital, at his own charge ; of which I have a Certificate, under the Clerk's hand, in these words. " At his own pro-
" per cost and charges, Mr. *Firmin* set up
" a Clock and Dial, for the use of the
" Hospital, at the top of the North-end
" of the great Hall. The said Mr. *Fir-
min* built two new brick Houses in the
" Town-ditch, one at the South-West end,
" the other at the North-East, to be di-
" sposed to such Officers, as the Govern-
" ment of the Hospital should think fit.
" Farther, at his own cost and charge, a
" Shed, or little Room, at the East-end of
" the late Bowling-Ally ; and a new
" brick Wall : he repaired all the Walls,
" and levelled the Ground.

At the charge of a Friend of his, a Ci-
tizen, he laid Leaden Pipes to convey the
Water to the several Offices of the Hospi-
tal ;

pital ; and bought them a large Cistern ; which in all cost about 200*l.* these were great Conveniences to the House, and the Orphans, who before fetched up the water they used on their backs ; which agreed not well with their strength, kept the House foul, and prejudiced their Clothes. Out of Town he built a School, with all conveniences to it, for the Hospital Children ; this he set up at *Hartford*, where many of the Hospital Children are Boarded : the School cost 544*l.* 13*s.* of which he received, by the Charity of ten persons, the sum of 488*l.* the balance is 56*l.* 13*s.* which lies upon himself for any thing that appears. He was wont every Lord's-day, at five in the evening, to see the Orphans of the Hospital at their Evening service ; at what time they prayed, and sung an *Anthem* by select Voices, the Chorus by all the Boys. After this, they sat down to Supper at the several Tables, under the care of their Matrons : here Mr. *Firmin* viewed them in their Provisions, and in the Behaviour both of them and their Officers and Attendants, commanding, or admonishing, as there was occasion. To this Sight he invited, one time or other, all his Friends, whether of the Town or Country ; and at last led 'em

'em to the Orphans Box, into which they would put somewhat, more or less, as they were charitably disposed. A Country-man was very remarkable: for having seen the Order, and Methods of the Hospital; when he came home, he made his Will, and gave very considerably to the place. I was once with our Friend at the Hospital, when looking over the Childrens Supper, which was Pudding-pies, he took notice of a Pye that seemed not of due bigness; he took it immediately into the Kitchin, and weighed it himself; but it proved down-weight.

These Cares did not so wholly employ this active man, but that he was also a great and good Common-wealths-man. He was always mindful of those who suffered for Conscience, or for Asserting the Rights and Liberties of the Nation: And he printed a great many Sheets, and some Books, of that tendency and nature; great numbers of which he himself dispersed. When King *James* commanded the reading his Declaration (for Toleration and Indulgence in Religion) in the Churches; a great number of well-wrote Pamphlets were printed and dispersed, to convince people of the bad design of that specious Declaration; Mr. *Firmin* was a prin-

principal encourager and promoter of those Prints, which cost him considerable sums, as well for their publication as otherways. He furthered, as much as in him lay, the Heroical Attempt of the *Prince of Orange*, to rescue this Nation from Slavery and Oppression: And since His Majesty has been seated on the Throne, our Friend has been particularly diligent in promoting the Manufacture of the *Lustering Company*; because it is highly Beneficial to this Nation, and as Prejudicial to our (then) Enemy: He had the greatest hand, and used the most effectual endeavours, for procuring Acts of Parliament, and Rules of Court, in that behalf.

He and Mr. *Renew* took great pains, and were at much expence, to prevent Correspondence with *France*, and the Importation of Silks, and other Commodities from thence: For this, they ran the hazard of their lives, from the revenge of Merchants and others, whom they prosecuted to Execution. A Merchant was so desperately angry at his Detection, and the great Damage he should unavoidably sustain thereby, that he went into a room alone, in a Tavern, and ended his Life by shooting himself into the head. The Agents of Mr. *Renew* and Mr. *Firmin* gave either

either the first, or very early intelligence of the *French Invasion* ; which was to have followed the *Assassination* of the King.

But he was not more a Friend to the Liberties of the Nation, and to the present Establishment, than he was an Enemy to Licentiousness. He was from the first a Member of *the Society for the Reformation of Manners* ; he contributed to it by his Advice, Assistance, Solicitations, as much as his leisure from the cares and endeavours (before mentioned and exemplified) would permit him : but his Purse was always with them. He had such a zeal against needless Swearing, whereby the Religion of an Oath grows vile and contemptible, and False-swearers becomes almost as common as idle and unnecessary Swearing, to the indelible scandal of the Christian name, and the great danger (even as far as Life and Estate) of particular persons : I say his Zeal against common needless Swearing, in what form soever, was so great, that in Coffee-Houses, or other places, where he over-heard such Swearing, he would immediately challenge the Forfeiture (appointed by Law) for the use of the Poor ; so that in Companies, where he was frequent, an Oath was seldom

dom heard. But he raised the forfeiture according to the quality of the person ; if a Noble-Man, or other person of distinction, or a Clergyman swore, they came not off at the ordinary forfeiture, appointed in the Law, it was doubled or trebled upon them ; especially, if any such were very common Swearers, or their Oaths of a profane or impious sort. If any person refused to pay the forfeiture required ; our Friend would tell 'em, the forfeiture was to the Poor, whose Collector and Steward he was : if still they refused to pay, their punishment (he told them) was, to be set down, by him, in the list of his *Incorrigible Swearers* ; and that, for the future, he would not own them as his Acquaintance, or speak to 'em as such. Divers Noble Persons would not endure this last ; but would immediately condescend to pay the forfeiture, or promise payment, the which he seldom remitted ; chiefly if they were often in that fault. As for himself, I never heard an Oath from him in 44 years (almost daily) Conversation with him ; tho' his temper was naturally quick and warm ; and he had often great provocations to Anger, one of the principal causes of rash and intemperate Swearing.

But

But let us return to Mr. *Firmin's* Charities. No body can have forgot the great number of *Irish* Nobility, Clergy, Gentry, and others of all qualities, and both Sexes, who fled into *England* from the Persecution, and Proscriptions of K. *James*. A Brief was granted to 'em, of which Mr. *Firmin* was one of the Commissioners; but besides that, the Ministers, Church-Wardens, and Collectors of every Parish in *England*; were to give account by Letter to Mr. *Firmin*, what Sums they had collected, and paid to the Arch-Deacons. Therefore, on many Post-days, several hundred Letters came to his hand, for a long time: and many of the collected Sums were sent to him, and by him paid into the Chamber of *London*; the Money given by the King and Queen was wholly, in a manner, Solicited and Received by him. The Numbers and Necessities of these Refugees required a second Brief; the Sum Total (paid to these two Briefs) that went through Mr. *Firmin's* hands, was Fifty six thousand five hundred sixty six Pounds, Seven Shillings and Six Pence. The distribution of the Money, gathered on these Briefs, was by such a number of the Commissioners; but Mr. *Firmin* was the most constant Man at their meetings:

sometimes he attended the Distribution from Morning to Night, without intermission for food. But besides the Sums paid into the Chamber, and distributed as aforesaid, I am assur'd our Friend solicited, and gave many private Sums to particular Persons, whose Quality made 'em ashame to take of the common Stock, or whose Necessities required more than (without giving offence) could be allowed out of it. When by the Mercy of G O D, and the Magnanimity of the King, *Ireland* was reduced, and the Protestants might now return to their Houses, Employes, and Estates; Mr. *Firmin* doubled his Industry and Diligence to furnish them for their Journey; because thereby he not only served them, but eased the Nation, especially the better (that is, the Charitable) part of it. He obtained great Sums for this purpose; Sir *Tho. Cook* (to whom I think it a debt to name him) gave 1500*l.* to this Service, apprehending it a Charity to *England*, as well as to the poor Sufferers. See here a Letter from the most Reverend the Arch-Bishop of *Tuam*, and Seven others; all of them, I think, Bishops of that Kingdom; I am sure most of them are.

To

To Mr. THO. FIRMIN.

SIR,

Being occasionally met together at Dublin, on a Public Account; and often discoursing of the great Relief, which the Protestants of this Kingdom found among their Brethren in England, in the time of our late Miseries: We cannot treat that Subject without as frequent mention of your Name, who so cheerfully and entirely devoted your self to that Ministry. We consider, with all thankfulness, how much the public Charity was improved by your Industry; and we are Witnesses of your Indefatigable Pains and Faithfulness in the Distribution; by which, many Thousands were preserved from Perishing. We know also, that some who refused to take out of the Common Stock, as being desirous to cut off occasion of Murmurs, were however, by your Mediation, comfortably subsisted by private Benevolences. We doubt not, but you and they have the earnest of your Reward in the peace of your minds; which, we pray God to fill with Comforts, and Illuminate with His Truths; making His Grace to abound in them, who have abounded in their Charity to others. And we intreat, that you, and all such as you know to have had their parts in

this Service, would believe, that we shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of it; as some Testimony whereof, we desire you, for your self in particular, to receive this Acknowledgment of your Kindness to our Brethren, and therein to

Your much Obliged,

and most Humble Servants,

Jo. Tuam,

<i>W. Clonfert, Bgr. Fernleigh, S. Elpin, Edw. Cork and Ross,</i>	<i>N. Waterford, R. Clogher, W. Raploe.</i>
---	---

Certainly, a Letter very worthy of their Episcopal Character; and which I have inserted into these Memoirs, as much out of Regard and Reverence to them, as for the sake of Mr. *Firmin*.

I shall not, I believe, displease the Reader, if I add a Poem, addressed to Mr. *Firmin* by a Clergyman of that Kingdom, and (unless I much mistake) a Dean there.

On

On the incomparable Charity, and generous Industry, of Mr. Tho. Firmin, in Relieving the Irish Refugees.

When the late James from King to Tyrant fell,
And for damn'd Stratagems did ransack
His lawless Claim, by his unlawful Tricks, [hell,
He forfeits, and himself from th' Throne he kicks.
His perjur'd Power he put in Irish bands, (Lands;
Cutting Truth's throat, and ours, t' retrieve their
Shepherd and Sheep were chas'd by Beasts of prey,
Or Men more greedy after Blood than they :
For these first slaughter Souls, and then they say,
For th' good of them, they must the Bodies slay ;
Lest turning into Hereticks agen,
They transubstantiate into worser Men.
To shun these Meritorious Acts we fled,
Quitting our Land, on Water to beg Bread;
To shun the Storm, we did embrace the Waves.
And Winds, less cruel than the breath of Slaves ;
Finding that faithless Element more kind,
For we were sav'd, some drown'd we left behind.
Sea-monsters are not half such thirsty Foes
For English Blood, as are the Mac's and Oo's.
And when on Board we still fear'd Teaguish Traps,
Because they're call'd the Irish Seas in Maps :
Except good Conscience we came stripp'd of all,
Which we our Naked Truth may truly call.
With glad yet heavy hearts we saw this Shore ;
So many Tears ne'er swell'd the Tides before.
This Weeping Scene soon mov'd the Royal Pair,
To recommend us to the Kingdom's Care.

*A select number, both of Good and Great,
Did give, and portion out, our Monthly Treat.
But our vast Numbers, and the various Sums,
The clamorous Poor (which bither daily comes)
Weary'd the Managers, who soon let all
On Indefatigable Firmin fall.*

FIRMIN, our Prop, and our Foundation too,
Who Raised and Built up our Hopes anew ;
Like gen'rous Wine, he seem'd by Age to grow
Stronger, not Sowrer ; and he ne'er ran low.
But let the Brasen Leaves of his fresh Fame,
Ring thro' the World the Praises of his Name :
And let the Echo's of his Virtues run,
To Regions far beyond the Setting Sun.
May his loud Morals gloriously resound,
Where either Men or Angels may be found.
May be the Things above ne'er beg in vain,
Who fed of Beggers such a num'rous Train.
He 'spous'd our Wants to such a high degree,
As if we'd all been his own Family ;
His hand, stretch'd forth, gave course unto our blood,
There is no Circulation without Food :
But all his Dividends did Unions prove,
Tying us faster in the Bonds of Love.
His Tongue so feelingly our Wants declar'd,
As if with us in Misery he shar'd ;
If Preachers mov'd their Congregations, he
Mov'd Preachers more, that they would fervent be.
Pity so fast into his heart distill'd,
'Twas like to burst the Vessel which it fill'd.

*As Ministering Spirits fly about, so he
In Works like theirs, seems all Activity :*

But

But if the Chariot thus Æthereal prove ;
 How Rarify'd the Soul which does it move !
 And thus breaks forth from its too narrow station,
 To animate the body of a whole Nation ;
 And is so full of Charitable Fire,
 That like Elias sure it must retire.
 Till then, he acts the Guardian-Angel's Charge,
 Afflicted Men to Succour and Enlarge ;
 And daily does that Heavenly Lesson learn,
 To Act for others without Self-concern ;
 So entirely making our Int'rest his own,
 As if he had been born for us alone.
 Tho' great and many were his own Affairs,
 He lays them by ; for us were all his Cares ;
 And that he might the more with us agree,
 He seem'd t' have lost all things as well as we.
 If we were Banish'd from all Worldly Wealth,
 He his Estate did Banish from himself.

Who'll then call that Faith bad, that does so well ?
 Without Works to Believe, belongs to Hell.
 And if by Faith Works live, we may him stile,
 The Father of the Faithful of our Isle.
 Scripture is Creed ; for Christians went to Bliss
 By th' light of that, before compiling this.
 Go on in Acting, for Faith moves by Love ;
 They're Twins, that labour here, and live above.
 Wisdom and Pow'r were Terrible in God,
 Were't not for th' Attribute of being Good :
 So Christians not for Thoughts or Speculation
 Are sav'd, but by Acts of Regeneration ;
 Goodness attempers all, in Man and Maker,
 And may (for ought I know) ev'n save a Quaker.

Faith the true Life o'th' Just is said to be ;
 But tb' Life of Faith consists in Charity.
 Thus his Faith is no single Star or Notion,
 But tb' chain of Graces in a Constellation,
 Which Irish Bodies most respects ; for we
 Were all eclips'd till'ts Influence set us free.
 His Moral Faith for us so current went,
 It past for Thousands when the Briefs were spent :
 Ours could not go so far. He to raise more,
 Did make his Charity to run on Score ;
 Contracting for Chance Mony certain Debt :
 So we enjoy'd what he perhaps wants yet.
 His Love so great, that like us he would be,
 Trusting to Providence as well as we.

I am no Poet ; but these Lines have writ
 To shew the World my Gratitude, not Wit.
 Unthankfulness would Disingenuous be,
 Beyond the want of Ingenuity.
 Therefore let all who are oblig'd, and can,
 Bring some small Offering to this God-like Man :
 That our Resentments may to after-Ages,
 Embalm his Merits in a few kind Pages.

In April 1693. Mr. Firmin enter'd upon
 part of the care of another Hospital, that of
 St. Thomas, in Southwark : a Foundation in-
 tended for the Relief of all sorts of Lame,
 or Wounded, or Sick Persons, till they are
 recovered by the application of proper
 Medicines, and other means, and by the
 service of the Physicians and Chyrurge-
 ons

ons of the Hospital. Sir Rob. Clayton, (now Father of the City of *London*) being, upon the Decease of Sir *John Lawrence*, chosen President of this Hospital, thought fit to accept of that Province: but upon view of it, he took notice that it was greatly gone to Ruin, the Ground about the Lodgings in a long tract of time rais'd so high, that the Patients lay as it were in a Cellar, without the benefit of Air or good Scent, but close and noisom: And the Roof and Walls so out of Repair, that the poor Patients oft-times could not lie dry in their Beds. He saw the greater part of it must be Rebuilt, it could not be Repair'd; and that the Rebuilding could not be delay'd without great Danger and Damage to the place, whereof some part prevented the Workmens pulling it down, by falling of it self: Therefore, knowing well his Friend Mr. *Firmin's* Activity, and good Address in Works of that nature, he caused him to be chosen one of the Governours of that Hospital. He was chose in *April*; and finding that the Revenues of the Hospital would go but a little way in the Rebuildings or Repairs, and besides could not be well spared from the Supply of the Wounded and Sick; in *July* he got him three round Boxes, in each of them a

Parch-

Parchment, one for Subscriptions of 100*l.* the second for Subscriptions of 50*l.* the third for 25 or 20 Pound Subscriptions. The President was pleased to subscribe 200*l.* and other Governours were liberal; so were divers Merchants, and other rich Traders; that the whole Subscription was not much short of Four thousand Pounds. Without doubt, the most of this Money would have been subscribed, tho' Mr. *Firmin* had not been the Solicitor for it: yet I reckon, and am supported in my computation by knowing and equal Judges, that the Subscription was greater by a Thousand Pounds, than it would have been if Mr. *Firmin* had not been concerned in procuring and improving the Subscriptions. A prospect of the Charge being taken, and some Money (near 4000*l.*) toward it procured; Materials must also be provided; and Workmen consulted and agreed with. Mr. *Firmin* was constant in the Committee appointed for that matter: I took notice, that the Master-Builders made their most frequent application to him; and he was as careful to oversee their Proceedings. Several of the Wards for the Patients are now finisht; besides a spacious Hall, supported by Pillars, which make a very handsom Piazza. It troubled

bled the Governours very much, that they were obliged to rebuild the Church of that Parish, which would cost some Thousands of Pounds, that could not be taken out of the revenue of the Hospital, without great prejudice to the House and Patients. It happen'd that the Parliament were then about settling a Tax for finishing St. Paul's Church in *London*; so the Governours of St. *Thomas* Hospital petitioned the *House of Commons* to have some share in that Tax toward the Rebuilding their Church: but because many other Parishes prayed the like assistance at the same time, the House, upon a debate in a Grand Committee, resolved, that only St. *Paul's* and *Westminster-Abby* Churches should have any such provision allowed to them. Mr. *Firmin* hereupon came home, not a little heavy: but he, and another of the Governours, put into Writing (that very night) some reasons, why St. *Thomas* his Church might better claim some favour of the Honourable House, than other ordinary Churches. They used such diligence as to get their Paper printed against the next morning: Mr. *Firmin* and his Associate gave copies of it to the Members as they entered the House; telling them, they must not expect to have any sick or wounded

wounded Seamen cur'd, if they did not grant something towards the Rebuilding of that Church: The effect was, that the House took the matter again into consideration, and allowed 3000*l.* to the Hospital for the use desired: On which our Friend came home with more pleasure and satisfaction, than if an Estate of that value had fallen to himself.

Among his other Charities, he was not unmindful of those that suffered by Fire, but would immediately apply himself to 'em for their present Relief: afterwards he assisted 'em in soliciting their Briefs, and to manage their Briefs (when obtained) to the best advantage. He often lent mony to honest persons, to answer sudden emergences or distresses; but he lost so much this way, that he was forced at last, resolutely to forbear lending: but, instead of lending, he would many times give some part of what they desired to borrow.

He put very many Boys to Apprenti-ships, and contributed to setting them up, if they had served their Apprenti-ships faithfully and diligently. He has told me that the Clergy of *London*, and other dignified Persons in the Church, often ena-bled him in this kind of Charity: He said,

said, he had put many Boys out with the mony of some of the richer Clergy ; who considered this (he thought) as a sort of Charity that extends to the person's whole life, and might be the ground of many Charities in time to come.

It deserves, in my opinion, to be reckoned among his Charities, that when (some two or three years since) there was a great Scarcity of current Coin, all the mony in *England* being either clipp'd, or debas'd by mixture of coarse metals ; he lessened his expence by laying down his Coach, that he might be the more able to continue his former Charities, at a time when they were more needful than ever.

I have now accounted for the general Endeavours and Performances of Mr. *Firmin's* Life : the particulars, to each general Head, were too numerous to be reckoned up, without tiring the Reader, if not also the Writer. But we have taken, tho' but a short, view of a Person, of middle Extraction and slender Beginnings, who raised himself to the honor of a very great number of Illustrious Friendships, and to an affluence of Worldly Wealth. To which when he had attained, by Industry, Integrity, and Worth, like our Saviour, *He went*

went about doing good. Nay, like the same our Saviour, He became Poor, that through his Poverty others might be Rich. A Person, who in respect of his endeavours in all kinds of Charity, may deservedly be called the Father of the Poor; in respect of the Irish and French Refugees, the Almoner of England. The Divine Hand had qualified him to do much Good; himself sought out the Objects and Occasions for it, and delighted in the doing. He did it with so much diligence and application, that he might even have said, with our Saviour, *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me; and to finish his Works*, i. e. the Works that he hath commanded.

John 4. 34.

The Jesuit that assisted the late famous Marshal Luxemburgh, in his last hours, thought he might put this question to him: Well, Sir, tell me, had you not rather now to have given one Alms to a poor Man, in his distress, for God's sake, than to have won so many Victories in the Field of Battel? The Marshal confess'd he should now choose the former; seeing nothing will avail any man, in the Eternal World, but only the Actions of Charity; or of Justice and Piety. The Confessor doth not seem to have been impertinent in

the

the question ; for in our serious last hours, we shall all be sensible, and forward to confess, that we were Wise only in that part of our life, that was laid out in the duties either of Humanity to Men, or Piety to God. The *Crassi* and *Cræsi*, the *Hannibals* and *Luxemburghs*, the most conspicuous for Wealth, or Military Glory, how gladly would they now give all that Tinsel, for some part of our *Firmin's* Sweat and Drudgeries for the Poor, and for the Deserving ? Is it for want of **FAITH**, or of **CONSIDERATION**, that we so much more delight to read the *Acts* of the *Alexanders*, the *Charlemains*, and other false Heroes, than of Persons that have been exemplary for Justice, Beneficence, or Devotion ; and are now Triumphant in Heaven, on the account of those Services to God, and to Men ? But so it is, either because we *are not Christians*, or because we *are Fools* ; we are (commonly speaking) better pleased with the Sons of Earth, than of Heaven.

I have read somewhere, but so long since, that I forget the Author's Name, and the Subject of his Book ; that the Punishment of *Judas*, who betray'd our Saviour, is, that he stands on the surface of

a swelling dreadful Sea, with his Feet somewhat below the water, as if he were about to sink. The Writer faith, besides his continual horror and fear of going to the bottom, a most terrible Tempest of Hail and Wind always beats on the Traitors naked body and head : he suffers as much by Cold, and the smart of the impetuous Hail, as 'tis possible to imagine, that he could suffer by the Fire of Purgatory, or of Hell. But, saith my Author further, in this so great distress, *Judas* has one very great Comfort and Relief ; for whereas the Tempest would be importable, if it beat always upon him from all sides ; at a little distance from him, and somewhat above him, there is stretched out a sheet of strong coarse Linen-cloth ; which sheet intercepts a great part of the Tempest. *Judas* regales himself by turning sometimes one side, sometimes another side of his head and body, to the shelter of this sheet. In short, the sheet is such a Protection to him, that it defends him from the one half of his Punishment. But by what meritorious Action, or Actions, did *Judas* deserve so great a Favour ? Our Author answers, He gave just the same quantity of Linen-cloth to a certain poor Family, for Shirting. It had been impossible that this

Gen-

Gentleman should hit on such a conceit as this; but from *our Natural Opinion* of the value and merit of Charity; it seems to us a Virtue so Excellent, that it may excuse even *Judas* from some part of his Punishment. I can hardly afford to ask the Reader's pardon for this Tale; I incline to think, that divers others may be as well pleased with the Wit of it, and the Moral implied in it, as I have been, who remember it after above 40 years reading, without rememb'ring either the Author, or Argument of the Book.

I return once more to our dear *Firmin*, to take leave of him forever. He had ver'ly much weakned his (otherwise) strong and firm Constitution, by his manifold Charitable Implyments, &c. having been sometimes liable to *Faundies*, often afflieted with *Colicks*, and scarce ever without a *Cough*; his Lungs had long been *Ptyfical*. He would often return home so tired and depressed in his Spirits, that his Pulse was scarce to be felt, or very languid: he would then take a little rest in his Chair, and start up out of it, and appear very vigorous in Company, especially where any good was to be done. The more immediate cause of his death was a Fever which seiz'd his Spirits, beginning

F with

with a chilness and shivering, and then a heat ensued. He was at the same time afflited both in his Lungs with a great shortnes of breath, not having strength to expectorate, and also with such terrible pains in his Bowels, that for many hours nothing could be made to pass him. He had for many years been troubled with a large Rupture. All which made his Sicknes very short. He had wisht in his life-time, that he might not lie above two days on his last Sick-bed ; God granted to him his desire ; he lay not so long by eight hours : And Decemb. 20. about two of the Clock in the morning, *Anno 1697.* he died.

During his decumbiture, he was visited by his most dear Friend the Bishop of Gloucester : What passed between 'em his Lordship hath made me to know, under his own hand, in these words. Mr. Firmin told me he was now going : and I trust, said he, God will not condemn me to worse Company than I have loved, and used, in the present Life. I replied, That he had been an extraordinary Example of Charity ; the Poor had a wonderful Blessing in you : I doubt not, these works will follow you ; if you have no expectation from the merit of them ; but rely on the infinite Goodness of God, and the Merits

rits of our Saviour. Here he answered, I do so: and I say, in the words of my Saviour, When I have done all, I am but an unprofitable Servant. He was in such an Agony of body, for want of breath, that I did not think fit to speak more to him, but only give him assurance of my earnest Prayers for him, while he remained in this World. Then I took solemn and affectionate farewell of him; and be of me.

It is usual to conclude Lives with a character of the Persons, both as to their Bodies, and the qualities of their Minds: Therefore I must further add. Mr. Firmin was of a lower Stature, well proportioned; his Complexion fair and bright; his Eye and Countenance lively; his Aspect manly, and promising somewhat extraordinary; you would readily take him for a Man of good Sense, Worth, and Dignity. Walking or Sitting he appeared more comely than standing still; for his Mein and Action gave a gracefulness to his Person.

The endowments, inclinations, and qualities of his Mind, may be best judged by the account we have given of his Life. It appears, he was quick of apprehension, and dispatch, and yet almost indefatigably

bly Industrious ; properties that very rarely meet in the same Man. He was, besides, Inquisitive and very Ingenious ; that is, he had a thirst of knowing much ; and his fine and mercurial Wit enabled him to acquire a large Knowldg, with little labour, but he was utterly against subtleties in Religion. He could not dissemble ; on the contrary, you might easily perceive his love or anger, his liking or dislike : methoughts, in both these respects he was rather too open ; but both are the effects of sincerity, and arguments of an honest mind. He never affected proudly the respects of others, whether above or below him : with which I was the better satisfied, because it follows, that his Charities proceeded not from any affection of Honour, or Glory among Men ; but from the love of God and his afflicted Brother. He was Facetious enough, but without affecting it ; for he valued (what indeed himself excelled in) Judgment, rather than Wit. He was neither presuming or overbold, nor yet timorous ; a little prone to Anger, but never excessive in it, either as to measure or time : which Acrasies, whether you say of the Body or Mind, occasion gfeat Uneasiness, and sometimes great Calamities and Mischiefs, to Persons who are

are ridden by those Passions. If the mind is turbulent by strong Passions of any sort, the life is seldom serene and calm ; but vexed with great Griefs and Misadventure. His manner of Conversing was agreeable ; so that seldom any broke friendship with him. Being well assured in himself of his own Integrity, he could even unconcernedly hear that this or that Man spoke ill of him. When I told him of that infamous Story of the impudent Coffee-Man, which had been broached 6 or 7 years before, had he not been over persuaded, he would not have taken any notice of him : Yet was more concern'd at Mr. B's printing it, than at the other fellow's inventing it ; not from the least consciousness of guilt, but that he should be so unchristianly us'd by a Minister of the Gospel, who too rashly took up the Story against him. Which shews what strange things may be done under pretence of a Zeal for Religion.

My Lady *Clayton* has so great a Respect for his Memory, that she has (with the concurrence of Sir *Robert*) since his death, erected a handsom Monument in their Garden at *Marden* in *Surry*, in a Walk there, called *Mr. Firmin's Walk*, by reason of his Contrivance and Activity in it. This

Monument is a Marble-pillar, about eight foot high, with an Urn, and Flowers growing out of the top of it, with this Motto, *Florescit funere virtus*, an Emblem you may conceive of Death and Resurrection. There is also a Marble-table fix'd to one side of this Pillar, with the Incription following.

To perpetuate (as far as Marble and Love can do it) the Memory of Thomas Firmin, Citizen of London.

NONE ever pass'd the several periods of Human Life more irreproachably, or perform'd the common Duties of Society with greater Sincerity and Approbation. Though it appears, by his public Spirit, that he thought himself born rather for the Benefit of others, than his own private Advantage; yet the satisfaction of doing Good, and the universal Esteem of honest men, made him the happiest Person in the World. But his Charity (which was not confin'd to any Nation, Sect, or Party) is most worthy thy Imitation, at least in some degree, O Reader. He was as Liberal of his own, as Faithful in Distributing the pious Donations of others, whom he successfully persuaded to relieve the distressed, parti-

particularly the laborious Poor ; for of ~~the~~
grant, idle, and insolent Beggars, he was no
Advocate nor Encourager. His agreeable
Temper rendering him an extraordinary lover
of Gardens, he contriv'd this Walk, which
bears his Name, and where his improving
Conversation and Example are still remem-
bered. But since Heaven has better disposed
of him, this Pillar is erected to Charity and
Friendship by Sir Robert Clayton, and
Martha his Lady, who first builded and plan-
ted in Marden.

Born at Ipswich, in Suffolk.

*Buried in Christ-Church Hospital, Lon-
don.*

I have now answer'd the Demand of
divers, as well Strangers as Friends, of
writing and publishing some account of
Mr. Firmin's Life and Death : I hope the
well-minded Reader will find much in it,
that may both confirm and strengthen
him in the best Ways, especially in Hu-
manity and Charity. He may see here,
how much beneficence a good Man, of but
indifferent Estate, is capable of exercising,
by means of Acquaintance and Conver-
sation with well-chuse Friends ; whom he
may excite, by his Example and Solici-
tions,

tions, to be highly useful in their Generation ; and thereby, be himself incomparably more useful, than otherwise he could be. But if I am less successful in that part of my Design, than I wish to be ; yet I have much eased my own mind, by paying some part of the debt that I owe to the Memory of our Friend. The rest I shall be always paying, by a Grateful and Mourful Sense of the *Public* and my own Loss and Benefit by him, when present, and as now deceased.

I cannot better end than in the words of a Letter, written to the Author of the ensuing Sermon, by a Person of great Worth; and who, from the time that they came acquainted, enabled Mr. *Firmin* to do many of those great Services to the Public, the Deserving, and the Poor, for which he was so highly commendable. "Sir, I
" received your Letter of Febr. 16. and
" therewith the Parentation to our valua-
" ble Friend Mr. *Tho. Firmin* ; that Man,
" of so extraordinary Affections, and Abi-
" lities, for the great Works of *Charity* and
" *Piety*. May it please the Divine Pro-
" vidence, to raise up to us adequate Suc-
" fers. In the mean time, what an A-
" batement of sorrow is it to us, that *He*,
" who alone is *Absolutely good*, and *All-pow-
" erful*,

" erful, lives forever? — I am your
" affectionate and assured Friend, Br. Br.

He had often signified his desire to be buried in *Christ-Church Hospital*, when dead, the Care of which had been so much upon his heart while living. In compliance with which desire, his Relatives have interr'd him in the *Cloysters* there; and placed in the Wall adjoining a Marble to his memory, with this Inscription, *viz.*

Under that Stone, near this place, lyeth the Body of Thomas Firmin, late Citizen of London, a Governour of this and Saint Thomas's Hospital; who, by the Grace of God, was created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, wherein he was indefatigably Industrious, and successfully provoked many others thereto; becoming also their Almoner, visiting and relieving the Poor at their Houses; and in Prisons, whence also he redeemed many. He set many Hundreds of them at work, to the expending of great Stocks: He rebuilt, repaired, and added Conveniences to Hospitals, weekly over-seeing the Orphans. The Refugees from France, and from Ireland, have partaken largely the effects of his Charity, Pains, and earnest Solicitations for them. He was wonderfully Zealous in every

every good Work, beyond the Example of any in our Age. Thus shewed he his Faith by his Works, and cannot reasonably be reproached for that which brought forth such plenty of Good Fruits.

He Died Dec. xx. 1697. and in the 66th year of his Age.

The End of the Life.

P

—

—

—

—